



Testimony in Support of
LD 854 *An Act To Ensure Continued School-based Services for Children with Disabilities*
Wednesday, April 7, 2021

Good morning, Senator Claxton, Representative Meyer, and members of the Health and Human Services Committee. My name is Tiffany Haskell, Clinical Director at Waban. I am a Special Education Director, School Psychologist, and Board Certified Behavior Analyst. I have worked with children and families in Maine for over 25 years. Waban provides educational and medically necessary services to pre-school children with developmental disabilities and behavioral health needs in a clinically intensive school-based program, offering evidence-based therapies, education, and treatment with a team of educators, therapists, and clinicians.

I also serve as a member of the Maine Association for Community Service Providers Children's Committee and am pleased to offer this testimony in support of LD 854 and on behalf of Waban and MACSP's members. MACSP is the state-wide association of more than 70 organizations providing services for thousands of children, adolescents, and adults with intellectual disabilities and autism to live and thrive in all of Maine's communities.

We thank both Representative Meyer and members of the committee for your support of the similar bill that was voted out of the committee last year with bi-partisan support. We also offer our thanks to the Office of MaineCare Services and the Department of Health and Human Services for their willingness to take a step back to more fully appreciate the complications and unintended consequences that can result when services, eligibility and rates are redesigned under a new rule involving a number of MaineCare sections and two departments – DHHS and the Department of Education, or more principally, Child Development Services.

What's at stake is the future of 3-5 year old children with developmental and other behavioral health disorders who require specialized care in clinically intensive preschool programs. These programs offer a range of evidence-based therapeutic and educational services that enable children to make critical gains in necessary skills that support their success in the community and in life.

The proposal of any new MaineCare School-Based Services rule, which involves multiple departments, at a time when the report by Public Consulting Group's study of CDS to the legislature is being considered, makes this bill more critical than ever. There are inconsistent approaches used across the

state by CDS in authorizing service hours for early intervention, as well as a reliance on MaineCare funding to meet the needs of preschool children with disabilities in educational and clinical settings, which contributes to a very complicated landscape when considering any changes to the service delivery model for this vulnerable pre-K population.

These many moving parts, combined with multiple dynamic changes underway, further underscores the need to establish a well-organized and visible stakeholder group as well as a provision in statute which will ensure that any future rulemaking for these school-based services be deemed major substantive as proposed in this bill.

We sincerely look forward to the development of a new School-Based Services rule that includes stakeholder engagement, avoids negative impacts to the waitlist and services, avoids rate cuts to providers of intensive services, and adheres to a thoughtful understanding of funding and the system of care for Maine's vulnerable preschool children.

We urge your support of LD 854 and thank you for your consideration of this testimony.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if there is any additional information I can provide.

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Please see attached.